



Pro-ARIDES

Programme Agroalimentaire pour la Résilience Intégrée
et le Développement Economique du Sahel

Technical Note Action Research

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Unleashing the potential of land commissions to ensure effective land management in Niger

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1 KEY MESSAGES

- In Niger, the management of natural resources is an imperative necessity for cohesion social and rural development.
- Land commissions are effective instruments for managing natural resources and preventing conflicts.
- The involvement of all socio-professional strata in the composition and interventions of land commissions allows for better local appropriation of interventions.
- Establishing the principles of equity, justice, and inclusivity makes actions more effective land institutions.
- The integration of land commission interventions into the decentralization process allows them to become self-sufficient with regard to external funding.

2 INTRODUCTION

This technical note is based on the results of action research conducted for the Pro-ARIDES project. It examines the constraints and opportunities identified in the field regarding **the functioning of land commissions and their limitations in preventing land conflicts and managing natural resources**. It formulates operational recommendations for stakeholders involved in implementing the program on the ground.

The Agri-food Program for Integrated Resilience And The Development of The economic Sahel (Pro-ARIDES) operates in the Sudan-Saharan zone of Burkina development program in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger aims to improve the resilience and incomes food security and of farming and (agro)pastoral households. To achieve this, the program relies on effective and decentralized institutions and organizations that enhance service delivery, optimize the management of natural and land resources, and stimulate local economic development.

The program is funded by Danish The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the cooperation. Its implementation is ensured by a consortium led by SNV, which includes CARE-Netherlands, Wageningen University & Research, The Royal Tropical Institute, their local partners, national and regional farmers' and livestock breeders' organizations, local authorities and research institutes in the three countries.

The data presented in this note come from surveys carried out in five communes in the project's intervention area (Table 1). The targets of these surveys are pastoral, agricultural and agropastoral households, members of communal and grassroots land commissions, producer and women's organizations, technical services and municipalities.



Table 1: Investigation areas

Zones bioclimatic	Regions, Towns, Villages		
Sudanese	Dosso	Karakara	Yeldou, Rougga Samia, Bourgami, Kara kara
		Tibiri	Tibiri, Sakari, La'llawa, Bechemie
Sahelian	Tahoua	Bangui	Guidan Harou, Tacha Adoua, Jataka, Tsarataoua
		Galma	Jinkay, Maiwatan, Cherifaoua, Tajae, Galma, Rini
	Tillabéri	N'Dounga	Moli, Haussatché, Ndounga Tarey, N'Dounga, Gala kaïna

3. JUSTIFICATION

3.1 Context

In Niger, the sustainable management of natural and land resources is a major strategic challenge in a context characterized by high population pressure, accelerated environmental degradation, and increasing conflicts between users. The country has one of the highest population growth rates in the world, estimated at over 3.8% per year (INS, 2023), which generates a growing demand for arable land, pasture, firewood, and water. This pressure exacerbates deforestation, soil erosion, sand encroachment, and decreased land productivity, already weakened by the effects of climate change (Soumana et al., 2024). Faced with this scarcity of resources, tensions between farmers, herders, loggers, and other rural stakeholders are intensifying, often leading to localized, sometimes violent, conflicts.

In this context, the Pro-ARIDES program undertook an assessment of the management of natural and land resources. Several constraints were identified by this study, including the coverage and effectiveness of land commissions, the occupation of shared spaces by crops, the obstruction of passageways (Photos 1 and 2), and land disputes.



Photo 1: Occupation of the corridors by crops marked Animal crossings (Field data, 2025) Investigation of



Photo Occupation by dwellings of the 2: THE marked animal passage corridors (Source: Field survey, 2025)



In response to this situation, Pro-ARIDES deployed several pilot activities to improve land and natural resource management, notably by establishing land commissions and strengthening their capacities to make them more operational. A survey was then conducted in the communes of Karakara and Tibiri in the Dosso region, Galma and Bangui in the Tahoua region, and N'Dounga in the Tillabéri region, to assess the performance of these land commissions. As a reminder, land commissions are local bodies for consultation, regulation, and mediation in land disputes, created within the framework of the implementation of Niger's Rural Code (Ordinance No. 93015 of March 2, 1995, establishing the guiding principles of the Rural Code).

3.2 Roles of land commissions

The importance of land commissions has been identified in the villages and communes within the Pro-ARIDES intervention area. These commissions were established by the program, and their capacities were strengthened through equipment and training on legal texts related to land and sustainable land management. Table 2 summarizes the capacity-building themes developed by the program within these land commissions.

Table 2: Land (Source: Training topics developed by the Field survey, 2025)

Pro-ARIDES in the various types of commissions

	Municipal Land Commissions (COFO)	Basic Land Commissions (COFOB)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local land issues and challenges: practices, constraints and solutions - Current issues and challenges of governance rural land in Niger - A reminder of the development and implementation of the Rural Code - The composition, the responsibilities and the operation of municipal COFOs - The legal framework for natural resources rural areas in Niger - The procedure for securing land rights to individual and shared resources - The procedure for registering a land right in the Rural File - The steps involved in setting up COFOs - Completing (practical exercise) land deeds (individual and shared resources) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local land issues and challenges: practices, constraints and solutions - Issues related to the management of rural land in Niger - A reminder of the development and implementation of the Rural Code - The steps involved in setting up COFOBs - The composition, responsibilities, and operation of the COFOB - The procedure for securing land rights for individual resources and the various documents to be completed (the new types of land transaction deeds) - Maintaining records of transaction deeds land - The mechanism for transmitting documents established - Completing (practical exercise) land deeds (individual resources) - Filling out the minutes of conciliation and non-conciliation for rural land disputes
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typologies of rural land conflicts - The causes of rural land conflicts - Prevention mechanisms and land dispute management procedures rural - Joint committees - The procedures of rural land compensation/conflicts - Compensation - The impound lots 	



Analysis of survey data reveals a varied perception of the roles of COFOs, including training and raising awareness among rural actors about good practices and legislative texts, delimitation, protection and securing of shared resources and spaces, conflict management, etc. (Figure 1).

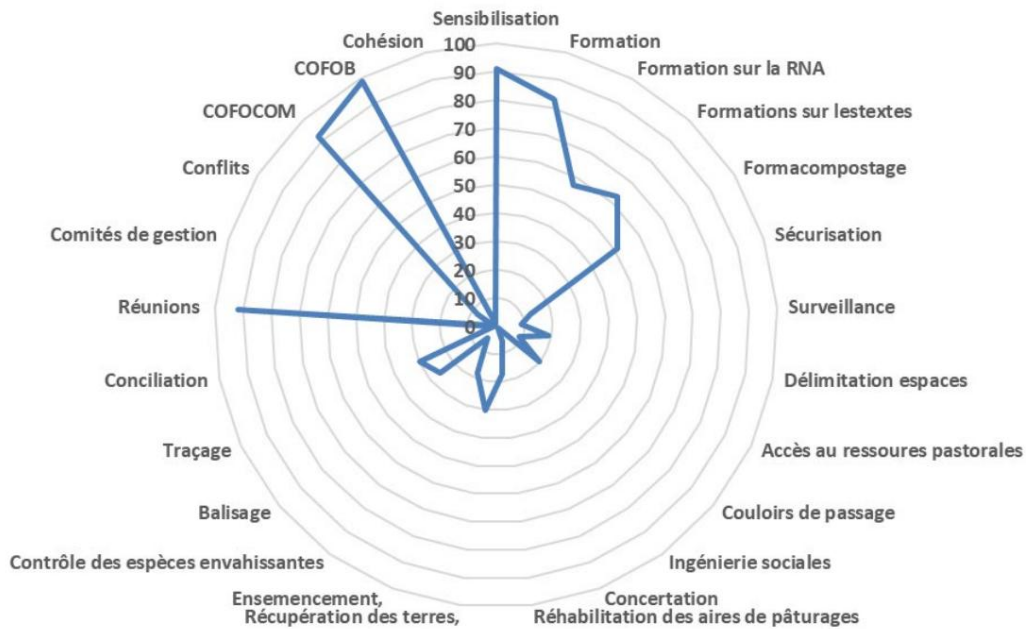


Figure 1: Perception of COFO actions by local populations (Source)

Field survey 2025)

Depending on the context and local land history, socio-economic dynamics and the extent of conflicts, the roles of COFOs can be summarized in six points:

1. Land conflict management, including the roles of mediation, arbitration, and conciliation.
2. Local governance of natural resources, through the delimitation and monitoring of shared spaces and resources, and the establishment of local agreements
3. Securing shared spaces through the marking of transhumance corridors, grazing areas and resting places
4. Training and raising awareness among local stakeholders regarding land legislation, disseminating the texts, and strengthening the capacity of populations on good practices in natural resource management.
5. Protecting the rights of vulnerable groups through consultations, participation in various bodies representing vulnerable groups, and the inclusion of young people, women, and pastors.
- 6 Monitoring and evaluation of land practices and natural resource management through land development work, including activities such as the rehabilitation of degraded land, the sowing of degraded rangelands, etc.

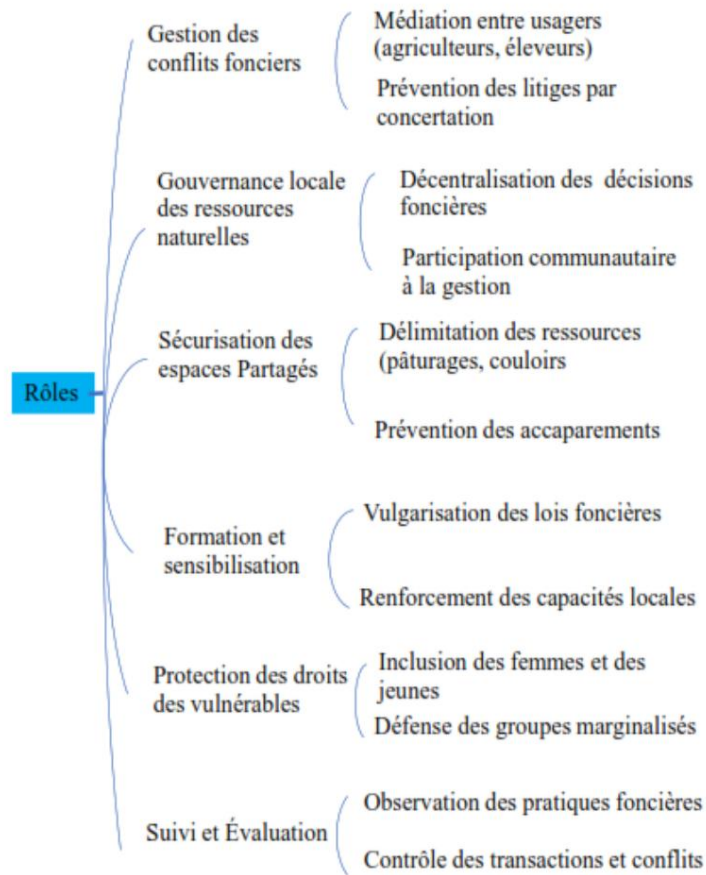


Figure 2: Roles of COFOs in Niger (Source) : Field survey,2025)

3.3 Challenges related to COFO activity

This analysis shows that several internal and external factors weaken the impact of these COFOs (Figure 3).

- **Internal factors** include: conflicts of legitimacy linked to the unequal participation of socio-professional groups and the low involvement of vulnerable groups; insufficient resources due to a lack of sustainable financial and logistical resources, partly due to dependence on projects and NGOs; tensions with customary law due to power relations and difficulties in integrating local practices; very limited training and awareness-raising activities due to the illiteracy of members and limited resources; and the low sustainability of investments due to their poor appropriation by local actors and the lack of resources for investment monitoring.

- **External factors** include: the low dissemination of legal texts; the emergence of more violent conflicts linked to the activities of armed groups and various trafficking; the ineffectiveness of the decentralization policy which limits the financial and logistical resources of the COFOs; the degradation of shared resources resulting from droughts and strong anthropogenic pressure.

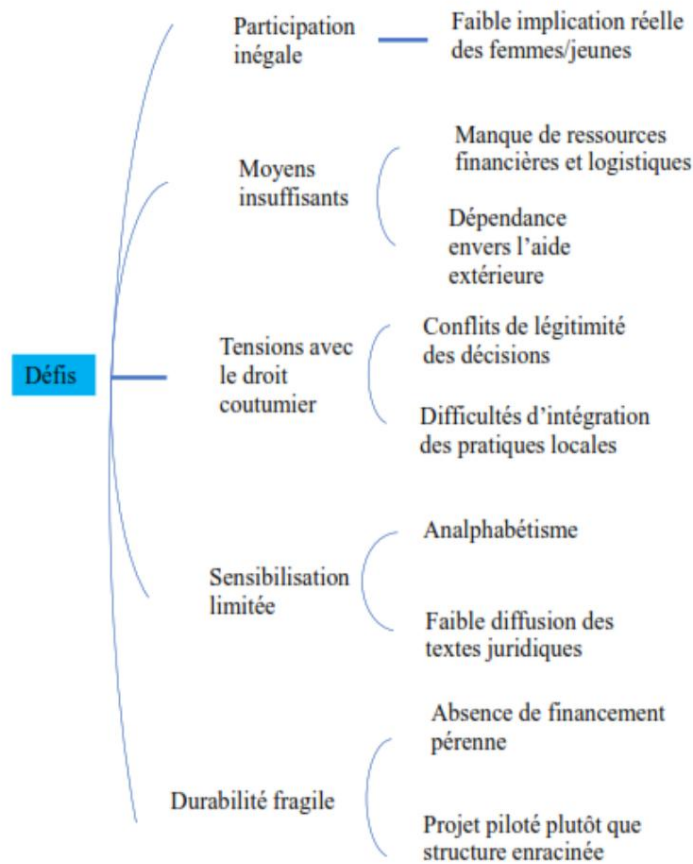


Figure Factors that limit COFO performance (Source 3: Field survey, 2025)

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

To unlock the full potential of these COFOs and make them more effective and operational, the following recommendations have been formulated for the implementing actors of the

Pro-ARIDES program:

- Integrate all COFO actions into a comprehensive and local plan for sustainable land management, in particular land-use planning schemes
- To ensure the effective participation of vulnerable groups in the establishment of COFOs, particularly non-self-sufficient households, pastoralists, women and young people
- Improve the participation of these vulnerable groups in awareness and training sessions on land tenure and good practices in sustainable land management
- Integrate the principles of equity, inclusion and social justice into all COFO interventions
- Strengthen the capacities of COFOs through targeted training and action popularization of legal texts
- Modernize the land data archiving and registration system through the digitization of registers and the use of geolocation technologies to map the various resources



- To anchor the actions of the COFOs within the decentralization framework for better investment planning at the local level, taking into account their financial and logistical resource needs
- Establish a sustainable system for mobilizing resources at the local level for COFOs through the collection of fines, levies on land transactions and the provision of services (advisory support, user guidance)
- Adopt a multi-sectoral approach combining local governance, security and rural development in resolving complex emerging conflicts related to the activities of non-state groups.

5. OPERATIONALIZATION

To operationalize these recommendations, it is necessary to:

- Ensure the effective participation of vulnerable groups (women, non-self-sufficient households, youth and pastors) as stakeholders in the COFO offices;
- Ensure the participation of these vulnerable groups in awareness and training sessions on land tenure and good practices in sustainable land management
- Conduct training workshops and awareness campaigns on the principles of equity, inclusion and social justice
- Organize capacity-building sessions on relevant legal texts with the land for the COFOs set up by Pro-ARIDES
- Strengthen the capacities of COFOs regarding the digital system for archiving and registering land data and the use of geolocation technologies to map the various resources
- Support the integration of COFO actions into the decentralization framework to ensure their activities are taken into account in local investment planning
- Support the establishment of a system for mobilizing financial resources at the local level to finance COFO activities
- Support the adoption of a multi-sectoral approach combining local governance, security and rural development to resolve complex emerging conflicts, such as those related to the activities of non-state groups.



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Main reference:

Soumana I., Ramatou H., Tougiani A., 2025.
Performance of land commissions, technical
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